

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

ACH Foam Technologies (formerly Heartland EPS)

Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership

From Safety to Quality Systems: ACH Foam Technologies Goes for Gold

Client Profile:

ACH Foam Technologies manufactures Expanded Polystyrene (EPS), providing products for construction, geotechnical, packaging, and industrial applications. ACH, formerly Heartland EPS, operates nine factories in seven states. The company employs 92 people at its facility in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Situation:

ACH Foam's Fond du Lac facility was in need of structure and organization. The company knew they had to create a more safe and healthy environment for their people. With their escalating casualty insurance becoming a significant cost to the company, ACH Foam management considered hiring a Safety Director, but realized that they were not qualified to evaluate candidates. The company contacted the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

Solution:

WMEP's manufacturing specialist performed a Health and Safety assessment and determined ACH Foam needed to develop a knowledge base in plant safety. WMEP trained company staff in the areas of OSHA (Occupational Health and Safety Administration) compliance and reporting, injury diagnosis and treatment, hazardous materials identification and protocol, blood-borne pathogens exposure control, and emergency evacuation. As a result of WMEP's assistance, ACH Foam significantly improved working conditions for employees and cut their casualty insurance rate by 50 percent. In addition, WMEP helped ACH Foam establish a more robust quality system. With WMEP's assistance, the Fond du Lac facility achieved ISO 9001:2000 certification, allowing the company to bring in new, more technical, manufacturing processes, and enter new markets. As a result of their quality system implementation, ACH Foam was able to start a shape-molding operation, which opened the door to produce foam molds for 'Lost-Foam' foundries. The company now produces molds for engines manufactured for the marine, automotive, and agricultural industries. They also produce shape-molded foam packaging.

Results:

- * Achieved ISO 9001:2000 certification.
- * Realized \$100,000 in cost savings.
- * Achieved a more competitive and profitable position.

Testimonial:

"The knowledge gained while establishing these processes positioned employees to take on roles of increased corporate responsibility. The current Corporate EHS Director, Corporate Quality Director,

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and Senior Corporate Vice President of Operations each participated in developing the Safety and Quality systems at the Wisconsin plant, with significant improvements."

Todd Huempfer, Senior Corporate VP of Operations